

**Wellesley High School Building Project Status Report
Wellesley School Committee
February 2007**

Wellesley High School is comprised of the original 1938 building and eight additions: Math-Science wing (1956), Larsson Gym (1963), Music Room (1964), Cafeteria (1964), classrooms on Math-Science wing (1964), Library/Media Center (1979), Industrial Arts rooms (1979), and the Fitness Center (2002). The last limited renovation project occurred in the early '90s. The school accommodated a maximum of 1500 students in the mid-'70s and a recent minimum of about 850 students in the mid-90's. While the current enrollment is approximately 1200, the next projected enrollment maximum is expected to be 1500 students in 2017. Significant changes have taken place in programs, scheduling, and special education mandates since the building last accommodated 1500 students, resulting in the need for more space and greater flexibility for continual programmatic and technological advances. In addition, studies* have indicated the ailing infrastructure requires major renovations.

Background

The project addressed at the 2004 Annual Town Meeting, with a projected cost of \$20 million, called for a 15-classroom addition to accommodate the projected enrollment increases, limited renovations, and adaptations to meet Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). During the Fall of 2004 it was determined that portions of the building not included in the project would also require extensive renovations in the near future. The School Committee began to discuss the possibility of modifying the project scope to include more renovation. The result was an expanded scope to the project to include a Phase II for comprehensive renovations throughout to extend the building's life for another 30-40 years, for a projected cost of both Phase I and Phase II of approximately \$86 million.

Rather than appropriate funds to proceed with that project, a Special Town Meeting in December 2004 asked that the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) be reconstituted and tasked with determining the proper course of action. FAC's recommendations to the 2005 Annual Town Meeting led to the architect's performing the Options Study (\$136,000 from existing funds) that resulted in SMMA's multiple options in their September 2005 report. FAC considered all the options, including new construction. With no new building site available and not enough square footage on the parking lot for an entirely new building, the option of totally new construction was not viable. FAC made several recommendations, the first of which was to conduct an independent programming study to determine the school's needs based on the future vision for the high school rather than on a replication of what exists today. Those needs would then drive the planning for a combination of new and renovated spaces that would include the renovation of the 1938 building, the most solid of the sections of the high school and historically significant, and the re-use of other portions of the building that are structurally and economically worth renovating and meet the program needs of the school

Program Vision and Specifications

The 2006 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$175,000 for an architectural programming study, and DeJong & Associates began working with the Town in late June 2006. The School Committee requested that the Town Moderator appoint a Program Review Advisory Committee (PRC) to monitor the study, to advise the School Committee during the project, and to report on the process at the 2007 Annual Town Meeting. Work was conducted through over 30 sessions with faculty, students, parents, the public, PTO's, architects, and several School Committee members. In addition to participation in the various activities and regular School Committee meetings, special 4-6 hour open School Committee working sessions were held to discuss details and seek agreement on a variety of operational issues and specification details.

In December 2006 DeJong submitted its report of Educational Specifications that included:

- an inventory of types of spaces required;
- a count of each type of space; and
- characteristics of each space - size, features, technology needs, desired location proximities, etc.

The report is being reviewed for final revisions and clarifications at the time of this writing.

Land Use Working Group

The School Committee also initiated a Land Use Working Group tasked with taking "one last look" at possible ways to have access to more land, either on a temporary or permanent basis, for construction, construction staging, or parking needs. This group included representatives from the School Committee, Board of Selectmen, Board of Public Works, Board of Natural Resources, Wetlands Commission, Historical Commission, and Town Counsel and was assisted by the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) personnel. The group's conclusion was that, with the possible exception of a portion of some contiguous land plus small areas nearby under the control of the Selectmen, there is no additional land available due to combinations of wetland, conservation, and park land protection statutes.

In addition, the Chairs of the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee met with representatives of Wellesley College and Babson College to confirm that there was no land that the colleges were willing to sell to the Town for a school site. Recent communications by another board with the Mass Bay Community College Administration confirmed that they also have no interest in selling any land.

The overall conclusion is that the Town has no other possible high school building site for the foreseeable future.

"Fit" Test

The architects (SMMA) who most recently studied the high school worked with our programming consultant to develop a series of concepts for "fitting" the educational specifications into a combination of new and renovated spaces. The concepts varied by the amount of new versus renovated space and the resulting impact to project phasing, project duration, parking, temporary classrooms required, and cost. The School Committee is comfortable that, although difficult, a school that would satisfy the desired educational program can be sited on the available land.

Exploration of Options and Alternatives

The size and complexity of the high school project leads to many questions about options and alternatives. Several of these logical questions are being documented in "Position Papers" that will be posted on the Wellesley Schools website after final review. Topics include the following:

- What would be saved if we build a school for less than the expected peak of 1,500 students?
- What are the ramifications of housing only grades 10-12 at the high school?
- Can a scheduling change at the high school reduce classroom needs?
- Would curriculum changes reduce the space requirements?
- What issues are driving the recommendations for gyms, the auditorium, and the cafeteria?

More position papers are likely to be produced as assumptions and decisions continue to refine the project.

Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)

The Massachusetts School Building Assistance Bureau, the state agency that historically reimbursed school districts for a portion of school building projects, was eliminated in 2004, and a moratorium was placed on requests for reimbursements. A newly created Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) with oversight and dedicated funding through the Department of the Treasury (\$500 million the first year) and new rules and regulations, will begin to review school building projects in July 2007. Wellesley has been staying abreast of the new requirements and processes as recommendations have been unfolding, including the request that municipalities plan projects that will last for 30-50 years and conduct the programming exercise that Wellesley has just concluded. As the first step in the process of applying for MSBA funding, Wellesley submitted "Statements of Interest" last summer for both the middle school project now nearing completion and the eventual high school project. Wellesley's expectation for reimbursement on the high school project is approximately 40% of the total project cost if the project qualifies for MSBA reimbursement.

School Building Committee

The new school reimbursement program mandates a collaborative relationship between the MSBA and the local community, allowing for the development of a solution that makes "educational and financial sense for everyone". The new regulations require this collaborative approach to the problem identification,

alternative assessment, planning, and building of a school facility as a prerequisite to funding consideration. Complying with this requirement, the Board of Selectmen recently appointed a 13-member School Building Committee (SBC) to bring this town-wide collaborative approach to the high school project. Its function is to monitor and advise throughout the process, working with the School Committee, the Permanent Building Committee, and the MSBA. The SBC began its work in February of this year. The SBC, with appointees being replaced as employment or elected terms end, is comprised of the following positions and current appointees:

Mandated Position

Representative of the Board of Selectmen
 Executive Director
 School Committee member
 Superintendent of Schools
 Building Maintenance Director
 Permanent Building Committee member
 Permanent Building Committee administrator
 High School Principal
 Person re: educational mission and building function
 Advisory member
 Three residents re: architecture, engineering, and/or construction

Current Appointee

Katherine Babson, Chair
 Hans Larsen
 Suzy Littlefield
 Matt King
 John Donahue
 Steve Gagosian
 Kathy Mullaney
 Rena Mirkin
 Bella Wong
 Rusty Kellogg
 Steve Baker, architect
 Cynthia Westerman, proj. mgr
 Tom Goemaat, construct. exec

Next Steps

The School Committee is requesting an appropriation to the Permanent Building Committee at this 2007 Annual Town Meeting for the PBC to work with the architects, Project Manager and other related committees to complete the documents we have, reorganize them according to MSBA regulations, and fill in the missing pieces through investigative work on the building and soils testing of potential building locations. This work will lead to more accurate cost estimates that would then be used in the MSBA funding formula.

In its entirety there are numerous steps outlined in the new MSBA regulations. The SBC will work with the MSBA to determine our specific next steps all along the way. While remaining mindful of the cost of delay, we will continue to align our efforts with the new MSBA requirements to maximize Wellesley's potential for possible reimbursement for a portion of the costs for the high school project.

Finally, the School Committee wishes to thank the numerous participants of the Programming Study, the Land Use Working Group, the PRC, the PBC, the Board of Selectmen, Advisory, and all others who have contributed greatly to this process.

*** Studies of the high school:**

2002 Feasibility Study by Design Partnership
 2004 Schematic Design by SMMA
 2005 Options Study by SMMA
 2006 Educational Visioning and Architectural Programming by DeJong

Appropriations

\$ 90,000
 \$650,000
 (existing funds from \$650,000)**
 \$175,000

** There remains a balance with PBC of just under \$20,000 from the \$650,000 appropriation.
